

Statewide Family Support Center NEWSLETTER

VOL. 2 • Issue 10

MAY 2006



*Serving Kentucky's Families
with Children Who are Deaf
and Hard of Hearing*

CONTENTS

Family-to-Family	4
The Literacy Corner	5
Around the State	6
Summer Programs	7

and more!!!

The Statewide Family Support Center NEWSLETTER is published monthly, September through June at the Kentucky School for the Deaf

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Click on "Family Information"

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The SFSC is part of the Kentucky School for the Deaf Outreach Services and the Statewide Educational Resource Center on Deafness, components of the Kentucky Department of Education.

To contact the SFSC, you can call or email:

CATHY HOWLE

502-897-1583 ext. 108 (v)

800-540-3323 (v/tty)

cathy.howle@ksd.kyschools.us

PAT BRUCE

859-239-7017 ext. 2503 (tty)

800-540-3323 (v/tty)

pat.bruce@ksd.kyschools.us

Write to us at:

Statewide Family Support Center

PO Box 27

Danville, KY 40423

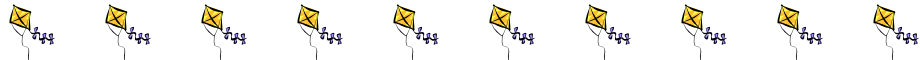


FAMILY LEARNING VACATION – 2006

It is not too late to register for the Family Learning Vacation on June 10th. This event is open to any family in the state with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. There are activities planned for the adults and children that will be both fun and informative. Contact the SFSC (see contact info on the back page) or your area Co-op Consultant for a registration form.



Families whose children are enrolled in the KSD Academic Summer School program can also register for the Family Learning Vacation and stay in Danville for the weekend instead of driving home and back. Save your gas and have fun at the same time! We hope you can join us!



GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

Cathy and I recently attended the "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" conference hosted by the Fayette County Extension Office in Lexington. They presented a lot of helpful information for this segment of families. We want to share some of it with you here. If you would like more information or have questions, feel free to contact us.

The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is often a very special one. But for a growing number of grandparents, this really means PARENTING a second family. Grandparents no longer have the luxury of sending the children home after a weekend visit, because they are assuming the responsibility of raising the grandchildren.



Few of us plan on raising a second family. Undertaking the full-time responsibility for raising a grandchild causes major changes in a grandparent's life. A grandparent facing the demands of parenting a second time is also struggling with the family conditions that lead to the

situation. In addition, this new role often includes physical, emotional, social, legal, and financial challenges that were not present when grandparents raised their own children.

WHO ARE THESE FAMILIES?

The number of grandparent caregivers is increasing. According to the National Census Bureau, in 2000, over 4.5 million children were being raised in grandparent-headed households. This was an increase of 30% from the census of 1990. There are another 1.5 million children living in households headed by other relatives. This phenomenon is not unique to a particular population group or geographic area. They represent all communities, all races, and all socioeconomic groups.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

Grandparents find themselves in the position of raising their grandchildren for a variety of reasons, but one of the most common is substance abuse by the child's

continued on Page 2

Grandparents... continued from Page 1

parent. Other reasons include child abuse, neglect and abandonment, teenage pregnancy, death, joblessness, divorce, incarceration, and illness, especially HIV/AIDS.

Most family situations are complex, and families headed by grandparents are no different in that respect. The reason why a grandparent steps in to care for a grandchild are often many and interrelated. Although many grandparents continue to hope that their adult child will be able to assume the parental role one day, the reality may be that the grandparent is the only constant parental figure for the grandchild. The parent may move in and out of the child's life but the full responsibility for rearing the child may well rest with the grandparent.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THESE FAMILIES

Along with the usual demands involved in becoming a parent again, grandparent caregivers must face many other challenges. They often lack support services, especially respite services. They may find it difficult to locate affordable housing and legal counsel or to obtain medical care and insurance coverage for their grandchildren. Their new situation may create extreme stress, which in turn may cause physical and mental health problems, such as exhaustion or depression.



While their friends may be looking forward to retirement, grandparent caregivers may be trying to balance work, child care and parent-teacher conferences. Grandparents who have already retired may be forced to go back to work to cover the expenses of raising a second family. In addition, grandparent caregivers often lack support from peers because of their unique situation.

CARING FOR A SPECIAL NEEDS GRANDCHILD

Raising a child is difficult. Raising a grandchild is even more difficult. Raising a grandchild with hearing loss and/or other disabilities is especially challenging! You have to recognize and deal with your feelings such as sadness, anger, and shock. It is OK, normal, and good to grieve the loss you are feeling. And then you need to get

busy! You have many special gifts to offer your grandchild right now and they need you more than ever.

- ✓ It is important to stay as involved as you can in the child's life, therapy, school, and special programs. Volunteer to help in the school. Do as much follow-up to ideas from the teacher or therapist as you can.
- ✓ Talk to other parents and grandparents who have children with disabilities. Join a local sign class or parent support group.
- ✓ Learn as much as you can about your grandchild's hearing loss or other disability.
- ✓ You can be a strong advocate for your grandchild's special needs. It is often up to you to make sure the child gets the help he needs and deserves.
- ✓ Show your grandchild everyday that you love him for the person he is.



LEGAL ISSUES

For many grandparents raising grandchildren, one of the most difficult challenges they face involved the court system. Legal and court systems are expensive, emotionally draining and can be difficult to navigate, but are often necessary.

There are many options to consider when deciding what is best for you, your grandchild and the birth parents. Prior to making any decisions regarding custody, seek professional advice and review all of your options. Avoid making hasty decisions during a crisis.

Custody issues, guardianship, adoption, visitation rights, medical and/or educational consent, and finances are just some of the possible issues that the legal system will address. Some counties have Family Court Judges. You can find out if your county has one by going to the Kentucky Court of Justice website and do a search of Family Court Justices. www.kycourts.net. You will see a list of the judges with their contact information. Call the office to ask for information or referrals to lawyers who can help. You can ask to see if 'pro bono' (without charge) services are available.

Continued on Page 3

Grandparents... continued from Page 2

RESPITE and SUPPORT GROUPS CAN HELP

The need for respite services by this population is paramount, because many grandparents are "going it alone." Many are not involved with any social service agency or even with an informal support network. They may not know what respite services are and might not know where to find them. Grandparents who have access to and use respite are able to be more effective and resilient caregivers.



Support groups offer grandparents who face common problems the opportunity to meet each other and share their experiences, knowledge, strengths and hopes. Linking respite services with support groups is an important way to reach and assist

grandparents on an ongoing basis. Because respite can provide continuous caregiving breaks, this partnership is especially crucial for grandparents raising special needs grandchildren.

The support groups in Kentucky listed below should have more information about possible respite services in their areas.

RESOURCES (National)

AARP Grandparent Information Center

601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
202-434-2296

GIC is a national clearing house for information about programs, support groups, research activities, and resources for grandparent-headed families.

GrandsPlace

Call: 860-763-5789
www.grandsplace.com

KINship Information Network

Call: 772-501-0502
www.kinsupport.org

RESOURCES (Kentucky)

The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program

Contact: Rosa Mills
502-778-7418
rmills@elderservice.org



This program is housed in the Oak and Acorn Intergenerational Center in Louisville. They provide a network of support groups as well as referrals for legal, mental health, medical and financial uses to relative caregivers.

The Grandparents & Relatives Raising Children

Contact Joan Bowling
859-356-3155

This is a support group serving the Newport area. They also provide referrals for a variety of kinship care services.

Open Arms of Hardin County

This program provides support groups, general advocacy services, and educational resources for relative caregivers and foster parents. Their support groups meet at local schools: Vine Grove Elem. (contact: Anna Winchell, 270-877-6026); Lincoln Trail Elem. (contact: Laura Cooper, 270-737-5110); Hodgenville Elem (contact: Gretta Muncy, 502-549-3817); and Creekside/Sonora Elem (contact: 502-369-8460).

Learning and Loving KinCare Program

Contact: Melissa Thomas
606-337-7895
mthomas@bell.k12.ky.us

This program provides services to kinship caregivers in the Bell County region through support groups and referrals to mental health, healthcare, and home support services.

The Family Resource Youth Services Center

Contact: Opal Oakley, Director
Murray City Schools FRYSC
270-759-9592
Toakley@charter.net

Provides a monthly support group and referrals to relative caregivers in western Kentucky.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Cash assistance may be available to children and their grandparents and other relative caregivers through the Kentucky transitional Assistance program (K-TAP). They have some "child only" grants that are based only on the child's income. An adult caregiver may also be included in the grant, based on their income and subject to work requirements and time limits. Call 502-564-7050 or log on to <http://chfs.ky.gov/help/KTAP.asp>.

Continued on Page 4

Grandparents... continued from Page 3

Other state and federal benefits may also be available to eligible children such as food stamps, health insurance, child care subsidies, and disability benefits. You can log on to the National Council on Aging's Benefits Checkup website at www.benefitscheckup.org.

KINSHIP CARE PROGRAM

Kentucky's Cabinet for Families and Children through their Department for Community Based Services offers the Kinship Care program. This program was established to help find permanent placements for children who can no longer live with their birth parents. Many grandparents and other relative caregivers have been able to get financial assistance, case management services and other supports through this program. Contact your local Cabinet for Health and Family Services office and ask to talk with a Community Based Services staff person.

A FINAL WORD

Raising a grandchild can be challenging. We all know that. But it also can be rewarding. Find (or start) a support group in your area. Celebrate the triumphs and the rewards as well as find help to deal with the challenges of what you do!

At the Fayette County Extension Office conference, the SFSC received a notebook of resources and information. We could not include all of in this newsletter. If you have specific questions or would like more information about any of the topics, feel free to contact Pat or Cathy.



FAMILY-TO-FAMILY



by Cynthia A. Jones, Covington

Cynthia's article recently appeared in the ODYSSEY magazine (Vol. 7; Issue 1) and is reprinted here with her permission.

Despite all of my teaching experience—even with children with special needs—I've learned daily that it is an entirely different ball game when you are on the parent's side of the fence. When my daughter, Molly, was born deaf, I experienced a wide array of thoughts, fears, and emotions. By the time we left the hospital, Molly, who was one of the first babies to be born after Kentucky implemented universal newborn hearing screening, had failed three hearing tests. I was told to bring her back in a couple of weeks because sometimes babies have debris in their ears from the birthing process

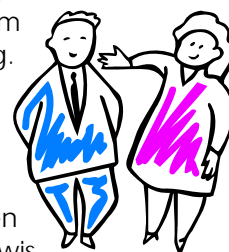
which can interfere with the hearing screening. I remember telling my husband on the way home, "We'd better hope and pray she's not deaf, because if she is deaf, she's got a long, hard road ahead of her." Molly is indeed deaf, and although the road has not been easy for any of us, many people and programs have smoothed the way. One of these programs has been the Shared Reading Project.

The only sign language I knew before Molly's birth was fingerspelling. I could make the handshapes for every letter of the alphabet. Sign language was one of those things I'd always wanted to learn but never found time for. After Molly arrived, I found myself wishing I had learned to sign already and terrified that I knew only the alphabet. Molly was fitted with hearing aids and responded well when her hearing was tested with the aids. So I began to think that maybe it would be okay not to learn sign language, although I still felt at a loss not knowing it.

I found a class and slowly began learning. As a teacher I have always known the importance of reading to children, and from the time I brought her home from the hospital, I read to Molly regularly. Even though I knew she could not hear the words, I still felt it was important for me to read to her. If nothing else, she would get visual stimulation from the pictures and we would have the quality time together. As I began to learn new signs, I tried to incorporate them into the stories. However, I found it challenging, to say the least, to hold her on my lap with one arm, hold the book with the other, and attempt to sign, all at the same time.

That is when the Shared Reading Project came to the rescue! Considering my limited knowledge of American Sign Language, I admit I was nervous at the thought of a deaf adult coming into my home. How would we communicate? Would he be amused at my feeble attempts at signing? Would I be able to understand him?

On the day of the first visit, Lewis Fowler, my tutor, came to my home with Sue Frisbee, the director of the Northern Kentucky Regional Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Sue, my sign language instructor since Molly was 15 months old, introduced us, pointed out that her purpose during this visit was not to interpret for the two of us, and then entertained my daughter while Lewis and I got to know each other. Soon, all of my questions were answered and my anxieties calmed. The first thing Lewis insisted that I do was relax! He was not here



Continued on Page 5

Parent-to-Parent *continued from page 4*

to look down on my limited signing abilities; he was here to help me communicate with my daughter through a basic parent-child activity: reading.

Each week when Lewis came to my house, he would show me the book he had selected, read through it with me, and then have me read it back to him, all in American Sign Language. After a few weeks, he stopped reading the book to me first and simply had me read to him, helping me as needed along the way. He was able to show me how to handle holding my daughter and the book while signing the story to her. He showed me how to sign not just in front of Molly's face, but also on the book, on her, or on me, wherever appropriate. I learned I did not need three hands to sign a bedtime story to my daughter after all!

Just as important, I could practice sign language in a genuine setting—my home—as opposed to in a classroom. Lewis taught me many new signs and encouraged me to use them. He also encouraged me to practice my fingerspelling. I have always heard that the best way to learn a language is in a setting with native speakers. I am now convinced that this is true! Without an interpreter present, I was compelled to rely on my own signing ability and use various strategies for clarifying when I did not understand a word or a concept. The signs *again* and *slow down* quickly became part of my repertoire, and there was always paper and pencil as a last resort.

Once I began learning sign language, I made an effort to expose my daughter to other deaf people. In addition to wanting her to grow up knowing other deaf people, I also wanted her to see other people signing fluently. She is certainly more likely to learn what will be her native language from other native users than she is to learn it from me, with my intermediate skill level (Williams, 1994; Goldin-Meadow & Mayberry, 2001). Thus, an important benefit I gained from the Shared Reading Project was my friendship with Lewis and his wife, Alma. Through our visits Lewis and I got to know each other. We spent a great deal of time each visit just chatting about everyday things. Alma sometimes joined her husband, making the visits even more meaningful. Although Lewis is no longer our tutor, we still keep in contact through e-mail and see each other occasionally at events within the deaf community. We have become friends.

An added benefit of the Shared Reading Project and my friendship with Lewis and Alma has been my own peace of mind. Like any parent, I have wondered what the future will hold for my daughter. I want her to be successful and live up to her potential.



When I found out she was deaf, my concerns were intensified. When I discovered that many deaf children do not learn to read well, my concerns intensified yet again. However, meeting a successful deaf couple has renewed my hope that Molly will be successful in her life.

Lewis's visits, his guidance in learning sign language, and the friendship I developed with him and his wife have all worked together to encourage me to step out of my comfort zone and talk with deaf people. The more I talk with deaf people, the more I am *able* to talk with them. As a result, my signing skills have improved to the point where I can use complex ideas and concepts with my daughter. Because I can *sign* entire sentences, Molly can now understand entire sentences. When Molly beats the odds—and she *will* beat the odds—and becomes a sophisticated reader, I will have the Shared Reading Project—and Lewis—to thank.



THE LITERACY CORNER!

by Heidi Givens

In this issue, I am continuing to answer questions from parents. Hopefully this information will be beneficial to many of you.

Question:

Amanda is learning to read this year, and I am curious about the best way to approach new words, especially the ones that I don't know the signs for. We finger spell, and I explain what they mean but when she comes upon the word in the story again she doesn't remember it as well as the ones that we sign.

Answer:

This is a great question that I am sure many of you have faced while helping your child learn to read. In past issues, I have shared with you strategies for reading to your child. These include book reading, the importance of signing/gesturing the concept(s) on the page and not just the sign for each word, as well as the importance of fingerspelling. You can refer to the June 2005 and October 2005 issues for these strategies. They can be found on the Statewide Family Support Center's website at <http://www.ksd.k12.ky.us/SFSC/sfsc%20home.htm>.

I do understand the importance of teaching your child the sign for a word. How else will they learn the word if you only ever gesture it? The Shared Reading Project (SRP) is a wonderful program that offers parents the opportunity to learn to read books in sign



Continued on Page 6

language from a Deaf adult. A Deaf individual visits your home on a weekly basis, teaches you how to read the book, then leaves the book and a videotape with you to practice for the week. This is a wonderful program that has seen much success nationally. If you are interested in learning more about SRP, you can contact Cathy Howle at SFSC.

To give you immediate relief from your frustration, below is a list of various websites that allow you to search for a sign. You will be able to view a video clip of someone signing that word. This is a collection I received from a listserv. I have not viewed some of these sites so I cannot guarantee their quality. This is much better than using a book. You cannot see the correct movement of a sign from a picture but can from a video clip.

I must share one precaution about these web sites. Many of them only give you the sign for one meaning of a word. For example, there are countless meanings of the word "run". A web site might only give you the sign for "run" as in "jog". If the sentence you are reading uses "run" in this context, "There is a run in my stocking," the sign for "run" listed will not make any sense to your child. As long as you keep in mind finding signs that are conceptually accurate, these websites will be an invaluable tool for anyone learning to sign.

Finally, your child's teacher is a great resource for how to help your child build his reading vocabulary. She will know what techniques she has used that are effective with your child.

If you have further questions about helping your child learn new vocabulary, please email me at heidigasl@yahoo.com or write to SFSC. I also welcome any questions or comments for future articles.

- 1) ASL Browser
<http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm>
- 2) Signing Online <http://www.signingonline.com/>
- 3) American Sign Language Library
<http://www.needsoutreach.org/Pages/sl.html>
- 4) Lesson Tutor
<http://www.lessonstutor.com/ASLgenhome.html>
- 5) ASL University <http://www.lifeprint.com/>
- 6) A Basic Dictionary of ASL Terms
<http://www.mastertech-home.com/ASLDict.html>
- 7) GG Wiz's FingerSpeller
<http://wowway.com/~ggwiz/asl/>
- 8) Handspeak: ASL Online Dictionary
<http://www.handspeak.com/>
- 9) ASLinfo <http://www.aslinfo.com/>

10) Fingerspelling Practice


<http://www.jal.cc.il.us/ipp/fingspell/>


11) ASLPro <http://www.aslpro.com/>


12) Center for Accessible Technology in Sign <http://www.aasdweb.com/CATS/>





AROUND THE STATE


 Tuesdays in **Northern Kentucky** – Family sign classes at River Ridge Elem. From 6:00-7:30, are open to any family with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Call Sue Frisbee for more information: 859-426-8036.

 Tuesdays in **Bowling Green** – Sign classes will be at the Greenwood Mall Food Court on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, from 5:30-7:00.

 Thursdays in **Northern Kentucky** – Sign classes for professionals will be at River Ridge Elem. from 3:45-4:45, open to any professionals working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Call Sue at the number above.

 May 5-7 - KSD will host its 1st Mini-Workshop/Social Weekend for high school students. Mini workshops will be held on: Using an Interpreter, Preparing Your Future Goals, Technology and Video-conferencing. Students will also attend the KSD Prom on Saturday night. Contact Ruth Sigler for more information: 859-239-7017, ext 2158 or ruth.sigler@ksd.kyschools.us.

 May 6 – the **CINCINNATI HEALTH FAIR** will be held at the Cincinnati State Technical and Community College on Central Parkway. The Key Note speaker will be Sue Thomas. They will focus on education and support systems for deaf/hard of hearing people to help prevent health-related problems. Registration is from 8-9 and there is no registration fee. Contact Betty Rosenberger at 513-584-3785 (TTY) or 513-584-5052 (voice). You can email her at Rosenbbm@Healthall.com.

 May 23rd - **Paducah area**; "Silent Dinner" Sign Language Group will meet at 6:00 at the Pizza Inn (near Noble Park) - 1001 Joe Clifton Dr; Families...bring your children...let them meet

continued on Page 7

Around the State *continued from Page 6*

others in the Deaf community and learn more about Sign Language and Deaf Culture! Come, bring a friend and meet some new ones...all ages of signers are welcome!!! Please RSVP to Paula Humphreys paula.humphreys@ksd.kyschools.us (270) 443-3055



May 31 – The **Central Kentucky Education Cooperative** is sponsoring a “Bringing Sound to Life” workshop, from 9:00-4:00 on KSD’s campus in Danville. Mary Koch, an Auditory Education Consultant will talk about principles and practices of cochlear implant rehabilitation. The goal is to provide a structured yet flexible framework for developing a cochlear implant program for children of all ages. There is a \$25 fee for anyone not in the CKEC. Contact Fran Hardin at KSD for more information: fran.hardin@ksd.kyschools.us or call her at 859-239-7017 ext. 2200.

HEADS UP:

- DeaFestival '06 – Saturday, July 1, 2006, in Louisville. A full-day of FUN for the whole family! Learn more at the KCDHH website: <http://www.kcdhh.org/deafestival/index.html> or call the KCDHH office at V/T 502-573-2604 or V/T 800-372-2907.
- August 4: Louisville, KY - Special Education Law & Advocacy Training sponsored by KY-SPIN & FIND the Community Parent Resource Center. Speakers: Pete and Pam Wright



SUMMER CAMPS and PROGRAMS



The SFSC has been asked to share information with families about summer camps and programs. Each month, we will list different programs as we are informed about them. Please contact the programs you are interested in for more information.

DEAF YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The Kentucky School for the Deaf will host a week-long event for high school students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the last week of June. The focus will be on developing leadership skills and will connect with the DeaFestival on July 1st. Contact Ruth Sigler via email at ruth.sigler@ksd.kyschools.us or call her at 859-239-7017 ext 2158.

CUE-SIGN CAMP

This is a truly dual-lingual summer camp for families and friends of deaf children! Hosted at Towson University in Baltimore July 14-20 and generously sponsored by both Gallaudet University and NTID/RIT, CueSign Camp offers opportunities for campers of all ages to learn or refine BOTH cueing and ASL skills. The focus at camp is unique - Deaf culture is celebrated, but so is the world of our hearing families. No need to choose sides! What a way to blow open your horizons!

New this year: 1) a teen leadership camp for D/deaf teenagers who are already dual-lingual and seeking an enriching week in the company of true peers and 2) Conference Day, where, instead of spending all your time studying the two languages, you get to hear about and discuss the cultural issues and linguistic implications of raising deaf children dual-lingually.

For more information, contact Camp Director Amy Crumrine at <mailto:CueSign@aol.com> or visit the website at: <http://www.CueSignCamp.com>

SUMMER ENRICHMENT/SHORT COURSE PROGRAM

Kentucky School for the Deaf is sponsoring a summer enrichment program for high school students who are interested in getting to know other deaf/hard of hearing kids from across the state. Activities will focus on reading, writing, and practical math skills with themes in aviation, electricity, autobody repair and structural analysis. There will also be activities that will help a student pass the written test for obtaining a driver's license permit.

All activities will be at the Kentucky School for the Deaf in Danville from June 4th through the 16th. There is no registration fee, but applications must be received by May 15th. Contact Ruth Sigler via email at ruth.sigler@ksd.kyschools.us or call her at 859-239-7017 ext 2158.

KSD's ACADEMIC SUMMER SCHOOL

It's not too late to register for the KSD Academic Summer School for any student who is deaf or hard of hearing, grades K-8. The program is scheduled for Sunday, June 4 – Friday, June 16 on KSD's campus. There is no registration fee. Contact Nancy Mann (859-239-7017 ext. 2223 for more information or email her at nancy.mann@ksd.kyschools.us.



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STATEWIDE FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER NEWSLETTER May 2006



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For those who have access to the Internet, you can download copies of any of our Newsletters at www.ksd.k12.ky.us. After you enter the website, click on the "Family Information" button and then click to either open the current SFSC Newsletter or open any of the archived newsletters.

Cathy Howle
502-897-1583 ext. 108 (v)
800-540-3323 (v/tty)
cathy.howle@ksd.kyschools.us

Pat Bruce
859-239-7017 ext. 2503 (tty)
800-540-3323 (tty)
pat.bruce@ksd.kyschools.us

